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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how one Texas school district, the Aldine Independent School District (ISD), created its own police department as an effort to control school-related crime. Formed in 1990, the Aldine Police Department (ADP) entitles officers to issue citations to students or make arrests according to their assessment of the situation and with their supervisor's approval. Citations usually involve a $200 fine for which parents are responsible or student performance of community work. The APD also sponsors community and student awareness programs. An APD report for one unspecified month indicates that the Department handled 256 cases, for which the greatest numbers of violations involved alarm responses (N=47) and miscellaneous (N=62). Out of 54 citations for that month, 22 were traffic-related and 19 were for disruption of classes. Area business owners and the police chief view the program as effective. A list of questions to be considered prior to creation of a district police department are posed, with a focus on responsibilities and evaluation. Copies of violation and warning forms are included. (LMI)

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CRIME IN THE SCHOOLS: ONE SOLUTION IN TEXAS

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CRIME IN THE SCHOOLS

In a society faced with daily headlines connected with violence and crime, the protection of students, teachers and school property has become more and more of an issue with local school districts. Within school buildings, administrators and teachers are given the responsibility of school safety which is a formidable task in some schools.

Michael J. Gant, a veteran teacher with the New York Public Schools, speaks out after a violent attack against him. "I believed that all was under control, that backup was available, and that my presence would bring order."[1] His beliefs changed in a matter of seconds as an explosive device containing 1/4 stick of dynamite was thrown at him exploding only two feet from his head. Gant still believes the "final responsibility for teacher and student safety rests with the teacher. Alert teachers have uncanny instincts for trouble. They seem to know when trouble is in the air and are very sensitive to changes in the environment that signal danger."[2]

As instances of vandalism, possession of weapons, and assaults while on school property continue to rise,[3] the Aldine Independent School District, Texas responded by creating its own police department. The department was formed in September, 1990.[4] Four years later, the department employees 13 officers, operates 16 patrol cars, covers 105 sq. miles, and protects 44,000 students. A.P.D. jurisdiction covers all Aldine I.S.D. property and any rented facility (i.e. - football stadium for play-off game). Its duties, according to A.I.S.D. Police Chief David Walden, include "protecting students, faculty, and district property, and upholding federal and state laws concerning adults and juveniles."[5] Walden believes his department is a service oriented department as its patrol officers balance day-to-day duties and educational

opportunities on a 24 hour basis. Its officers are equipped with bullet-proof vests, pocket recorders, video recorders in patrol cares and a revolver. One officer is assigned to the Harris County Gang Task Force and both departments share information concerning gang activity.[6]

Officers are visible in all secondary schools including the intermediate level. They often walk the hallways acquainting themselves with students and faculty members. They work closely with building administrators and are of great assistance to diffuse difficult situations which might escalate.[7]

Officers issue students citations or make arrests according to *their* assessment of the situation and with the approval of the A.P.D. supervisor. Citations may be issued for assault, disorderly conduct, disruption of classes, possession of drugs/alcohol paraphernalia, and/or public intoxication. Citations are also issued for traffic violations as well as the listed infractions. Serious violations may result in arrests.[8]

Citations usually involve a $200 fine which parents are responsible for, however, the student may be sentenced to community service work by the Justice of the Peace if the family is unable to pay the fine. If a student refuses to do community service work, he/she may be detained in the Juvenile Detention Center.[9] If a student is arrested by the Aldine Police Department, they are only released to a parent or guardian.[10]

A.P.D. monthly report for one month indicates that 256 cases were handled by the department. These cases involved:

Juvenile arrests	24
Adult arrests	10
Alarm responses	47
Disturbances/fights	19
Disorderly conduct or student out of control	15
Assaults/agg. assault/sexual assault/threat	22
Criminal mischief	27
Stolen/abandoned vehicles	7

Burglary of a motor vehicle	5
Possession of controlled substance	3
Possession of firearm/weapon	7
Burglary/theft	14
Possession of paging device	19
Miscellaneous	62

A total of 54 citations were issued for the following reasons:

Traffic related	22
Assault	9
Disorderly conduct	3
Disruption of classes	19
Possession of drugs/alcohol	0
Public intoxication	1

Along with these written citations, 32 warning citations were written and 47 verbal warnings were issued.[11]

The Aldine Police Department is also involved in educational programs which include a student program much like DARE. They also do community awareness seminars for PTA or civic organizations, as well as staff development on drug/gang awareness.[12] Aldine officers may also be called on to assist district truancy officers in some cases.[13]

The task of picking up and delivering district and school deposits is carried on by officers who are not on regular duty. They "sign on" and are paid through a local and federally funded operating budget.[14]

As many other school districts embrace the growing problem of crime in the schools, one option which might be considered is a district police department. In Aldine, it has proven to be an effective tool to assist administrators and school personnel. Waldron states that "area businesses have expressed their gratitude" as the Aldine Police Department carries out its duties in areas surrounding the schools. As an administrator, great

comfort can be taken in knowing that officers are readily available and highly visible.

As school districts move to create their own police force, certain questions need addressing:

1. Who will evaluate the performance of the police force? Will teachers and principals be involved?
2. Are we replacing an existing local police service or is this an additional service?
3. Under what conditions do we permit a "hot pursuit" in a vehicle?
4. Can an officer fire his weapon in a school?
5. What will we do with the police force during vacation periods?
6. How do we articulate with other agencies and police departments?

The modern police force in a school district is here to stay. It is probably time we standardized some of the above answers. Crime in the school is real and we need police support. We also need to use and control police in our schools.

ALDINE I.S.D. POLICE DEPT.
14910 ALDINE - WESTFIELD RD.
HOUSTON, TX 77032

Class C - ___ J.P. Court
Nº 003378

I hereby promise to appear at the time and place designated in this notice.

SIGNATURE: THIS IS NOT A PLEA OF GUILTY

VIOLATOR LAST NAME FIRST MIDDLE
RESIDENCE ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP CODE TELEPHONE
DRIVER LICENSE NO STATE DATE OF BIRTH SEX RACE HEIGHT
COMM VEH OWNER/LESSEE RR/C NO OTHER LOCATOR INFORMATION BUSINESS TELEPHONE
COMM VEH CDL INTER ST INTRA ST GVWR PASSENGERS HAZ MAT PLAC SOC SEC NO
VEHICLE LICENSE NO STATE COLOR YEAR MODEL MAKE TYPE
COUNTY DATE TIME M WEATHER TRAFFIC ACCIDENT
LOCATION ALLEGED SPEED
VIOLATION(S) SPEED LIMIT
1 RADAR CAL
2
YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED TO APPEAR BEFORE
JUDGE ___ CT ___ TELEPHONE ___
AT ON OR BEFORE 19 AT M
ISSUED BY I.D NO.

Nº 001951

ALDINE ISD POLICE DEPT.
14910 ALDINE WESTFIELD
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77032

DATE HOUR M

DRIVER NAME LAST FIRST MIDDLE
RESIDENCE ADDRESS CITY STATE
DOB D L NO & STATE VEHICLE LIC NO YEAR & STATE
LOCATION YEAR OF VEHICLE

VIOLATION ___

THIS IS A WARNING ONLY for an infraction of the law, committed to a minor degree or with extenuating circumstances present. No penalty will be assessed and no further action on your part is necessary other than to comply with the laws in the future.

SIGNATURE X ___

This warning is given to you in an effort to secure your cooperation in better observance of the laws. The AISD Police Department believes that good citizens will comply with laws when reminded.

ISSUED BY ___

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SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

AND GANGS

ESTABLISH FIRM, FAIR POLICES THAT REFLECT AN ATTITUDE OF COMMUNITY UNITY WITHIN THE CAMPUS

HANDLE DISCIPLINE VIOLATIONS INDEPENDENTLY WITH EACH GANG MEMBER

NOTE ⇨ DISCUSS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

INVOLVE LAW ENFORCEMENT IN SERIOUS CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

COMMUNICATE TO GANG MEMBERS THAT THEY WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTION - LAW VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED

CUTTING AWAY SWIFTLY AT GANGS REDUCE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF GANG ACTIVITY FOR BORDERLINE GROUPS

NOTES

1 Michael J. Gant, "Teacher Authority: The Great Illusion," School Safety, (Fall, 1992): 13.

2 Ibid., 14.

3 Carlos Aguilar, Channel 13 Evening News, (April 21, 1994).

4 Judy Williams, AISD Director of Public Information, AISD Administrative Internship Address, (Spring, 1992).

5 Aldine ISD Police Chief David Waldron, Personal Interview, (April 19, 1994).

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Aldine ISD Police Department, Monthly Statistics, (March, 1994).

12 Aldine Police Lieutenant Vicki Ruhmann, Interview. (April 19, 1994).

13 Waldron

14 Ibid.